



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
Oct. 9, 2006

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Secondhand Smoke Affects Children's Health

BISMARCK, N.D. – In recognition of *Home Indoor Air Quality Month*, the North Dakota Department of Health is reminding families about the negative impact secondhand smoke can have on their children's health.

A 2006 Surgeon General's report indicated there is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke. Breathing even a little secondhand smoke can be harmful to your health and the effects of secondhand smoke can be particularly dangerous for children.

"Children who are exposed to secondhand smoke are inhaling many of the same cancer-causing toxins as smokers," said Karalee Harper, director of the state's Division of Tobacco Prevention and Control. "Because their bodies are still developing, infants and children are especially vulnerable to the poisons in secondhand smoke."

According to the Surgeon General's report, exposure to the more than 4,000 chemicals in secondhand smoke puts children at risk for severe respiratory diseases, ear infections and more severe asthma. Exposure to secondhand smoke causes low birth weight in babies and increases the possibility that an infant will die of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

The Surgeon General offers several ways for people to protect themselves and their loved ones from secondhand smoke.

- Make sure your home and car are smoke-free.
- Ask people not to smoke around you or your children.
- Make sure your children's school, baby sitter's home and daycare center are smoke-free.
- Choose restaurants and other businesses that are smoke-free.
- Teach your children to stay away from secondhand smoke.
- Avoid exposure to secondhand smoke if you are pregnant.

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“Following the Surgeon General’s advice about how to protect your family from secondhand smoke is a great start to providing a healthy environment for your family,” said Harper. “And, if a parent smokes, the single most important thing they can do to protect their children’s health is to get help with quitting.”

If parents smoke and want help quitting, they can call the North Dakota Tobacco Quitline at 866.388.7848.

For more information about secondhand smoke, contact Karalee Harper, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.4517 or 800.280.5512. For more information about *Home Indoor Air Quality Month*, contact Sandi Washek, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.5188.

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